

Keep the Best, Improve the Rest
Council President Scott Peters, First District
For the La Jolla Light, April 2008

I chuckled when I picked up the March 13 issue of the *La Jolla Light*, showing skyscrapers rising from the La Jolla beach, and asking if this was in our future. I wondered what kind of panicked phone calls this would generate for my office! I must admit that the cover photo did get me to read the article.

Fortunately, buildings that would fit in Singapore will never form a new La Jolla skyline. On this front, we are well protected by the 30-foot height limit enacted by voters in the 1970s. Even allowing for some uncertainty on how 30 feet is measured, there can't be any really tall buildings here. Whatever you think of your neighbors' architecture, the most out of place buildings in La Jolla are still those monsters built before 1972.

Nor will there be any substantial increase in housing density. At the time we updated the La Jolla Community Plan, there were approximately 29,000 dwelling units in La Jolla, and zoning for only 400 or so more. Through that update, which I was proud to shepherd, we not only preserved that zoning, but we enhanced protections for sensitive coastal bluffs and clarified the protections for hillsides. The community plan will guide the way we develop and redevelop land, protect community character, and act as responsible stewards of our local environment and economy. So while we will continue to see landowners struggle to put that last house on the toughest lot to build on, and we may see shopkeepers in the Shores, the Village or Bird Rock add a unit or two, we won't see a major change in the number of people living here.

Our challenges are not quantitative, but qualitative. We must protect the things about La Jolla we cherish the most – coastal access and views, water quality, the charm of our commercial centers – and improve those things that less than adequately serve our needs.

We've already made a lot of progress in meeting the needs of our residents – these are changes La Jollans like. Our successful efforts to reduce sewer spills have led to 80% reductions in beach closure days and consistently good grades from statewide ocean water quality surveys. The reconfiguration of the "throat" has reduced our driving delays and greatly beautified the doorway to our community. Our revived program to bury utility lines underground will over time enhance our view corridors and neighborhood charm. Our progress on replacing crumbling water and sewer infrastructure has stopped the semi-annual water main breaks. The neighborhood-created Bird Rock traffic and beautification plan will make this thriving commercial zone a cool and walkable destination for residents and visitors. And the coming renovation of our lifeguard towers will make our beaches safer and more attractive.

We have some notable challenges. The Shores still faces "mansionization" – the construction of out of scale new homes – since the governing regulations have been interpreted by the city to be more lax than the typical zoning codes. With community support, we could fix this. The Village faces stiff competition from downtown San

Diego, Orange County and other destinations for visitors and shoppers; the success of the village is important to all La Jollans. We may need to consider changes to our regulations (not necessarily paid parking) that will allow the Village to remain a vibrant place for La Jollans to work, live, shop and play.

Bird Rock will be greatly enhanced when road construction is completed this summer. However, there may be too much retail space for that street to handle, and the mix of uses may have to be changed. And in Bird Rock, as in much of La Jolla, we need to give special attention to the kinds of architecture that we want and don't want. We have a great idea of this from our workshops last November, but there is a lot of community fear about actually making the changes that would bring the desired results.

We are all in this together. Many, if not most, of us would never dream of living anywhere other than La Jolla; it is our community, our home. And just as we lovingly tend to our homes and gardens, making repairs and renovations as they are needed, so too we must lovingly care for our larger community and keep it as unique and appealing as it is today. I have certainly enjoyed confronting and overcoming many of these challenges with you; my successors will no doubt continue to face them. At least I'm pretty confident that in 2030 we won't be talking about seals.